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ABSTRACT

The personal adjustment of gifted and normal college students was compared, and the effects of different educational programs for the gifted were assessed. Sixty-three males and 61 females who had been identified as gifted during elementary or junior high school by the California public schools were divided into three groups based on the degree of special programming they received through California's Gifted and Talented Education Program (GATE). The educational programming for the gifted consisted of: a high GATE intervention group with all-day special classroom, a medium GATE intervention group with 2 hours of special study each week, and a low intervention group with little or no special educational programming. The gifted students and control group were administered the California Personality Inventory and Rotter's Internal-External Locus of Control Scale. In addition, Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores, grade point averages (GPA's), and demographic characteristics of students were examined. The inventory scores indicated that gifted women were better adjusted than normal women, and that the normal men were better adjusted than the gifted men. While the gifted students had significantly higher SAT scores and GPA's than the normal students, the three groups of gifted students did not differ on these measures. The gifted women in the high intervention group had higher career aspirations than women in the other gifted groups, and the gifted men in the intervention groups had higher scores on self-acceptance. (SW)

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Educational Strategies and Personality Outcomes of Gifted and Nongifted College Students

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Abstract

The issues of personal adjustment, intellectual achievement, and motivation to achieve were assessed in gifted—as identified during elementary or junior high school—and normal college students. Using the California Psychological Inventory, gifted women were shown to be higher on personal adjustment measures than controls; however, gifted men were lower. The gifted college students were further divided into three groups according to the amount of time they had spent in special programs for the gifted. The three groups did not differ on intellectual measures as college students. The gifted women in the high intervention group had higher career aspirations than women in the other gifted groups. The gifted men in the intervention groups had higher scores on self acceptance than gifted men who had not participated in a gifted program.

Educational Strategies and Personality Outcomes of Gifted and Nongifted College Students

Terman's longitudinal study resulted in a solid foundation of descriptive information about the lives of intellectually gifted individuals. One of the many contributions of Terman's study was the finding that intellectual superiority was accompanied by a superiority in social and personal adjustment (Terman & Oden, 1947; Oden, 1968). However, recent studies have described the adjustment problems of gifted individuals (Chambers & Dusseault, 1970; Mason, Adams, & Blood, 1965). In the current study, the question of personal adjustment was examined by comparing college students who had been identified as gifted during their public school years with a group of students that had not been identified as gifted on the California Psychological Inventory.

A second issue of concern in the present study was the effect of enriching and accelerating the education that gifted children receive. Although the bulk of the empirical evidence attests to the positive influences that acceleration has on both intellectual and social skills (George, Cohn, & Stanley, 1979; Montour, 1976), several recent studies suggest that being identified as gifted and participating in a gifted program might lead to a variety of personality characteristics that are undesirable (Braga, 1971; Mason, Adams, & Blood, 1965). A theme running through this literature is that the pressure to excell, which is often directed toward gifted students, might be a factor in negative personal and social adjustment. To evaluate this possibility, the present study compares the personality status of individuals who have participated in programs, of varying intensity, for the gifted to gifted individuals who have had no specific educational interventions.

Finally, the present study was undertaken to examine the effects of different educational strategies on gifted men and women. Current statistics suggest that

gifted women are failing to actualize their training and potential. Explanations of this failure range from lack of motivation and opportunity (Terman & Oden, 1959) to the fact that gifted women encounter contradictory expectations—one for women and one for gifted individuals (Schwartz, 1980). In order to clarify some of these issues, the present study examines the areas of intellectual skills, personal adjustment, and career aspirations in a sample of gifted women who participated in three different educational experiences.

The subjects in this study were 124 volunteer college students—63 males and 61 females—who had been identified as gifted at some point in their elementary or junior high school education by the California public school system. These students were divided into three groups based on the degree of special programming they received through California's Gifted and Talented Education Program (GATE): (a) a high GATE intervention group that had been in an all day classroom for the gifted, (b) a medium GATE intervention group that had participated in 2 hours of special study each week, and (c) a low intervention group that received little or no special educational programming. 68 college students—41 females and 27 males—, who had never been identified as gifted, served as the control group.

Personal adjustment was assessed by the CPI and Rotter's Internal - External Locus of Control Scale which has been shown to successfully distinguish between groups of gifted achievers and underachievers. Intellectual skills were assessed by examining SAT scores and Grade Point Averages. Finally, subjects filled out demographic information sheets which included information on parental education, parental employment, parental marital status, the number of children in the family, the subjects' birth order, career aspirations of the subject, and the college major the subject was pursuing.

A multivariate analysis of variance comparing gifted and nongifted males and females on the CPI and Rotter indicated that sex ($p < .05$), giftedness ($p. < .05$), and the interaction between sex and giftedness ($p. < .05$) were significant. Uni-

variate analysis revealed that the gifted students differed from the nongifted only on capacity for status and socialization. The gifted group scored lower than controls on socialization indicating that they were more demanding, opinionated, nonconforming, and resistant than controls.

In examining the overall interaction, the gifted women in this study were better adjusted than their control counterparts. In the case of men, the reverse was true. The control men appeared overall to be somewhat better adjusted than the gifted subjects. Several possible explanations for this finding exist. First, it could be due to sampling error. Perhaps the better adjusted gifted students go to more prestigious universities. Secondly, the control group might have just been exceptionally well adjusted. Finally, a more psychological explanation for this finding would be that men are already expected to perform at a high level and any additional expectations might, over a period of years, contribute to a lower level of personal adjustment.

The second question of interest was whether the kinds of educational experiences the gifted received made any difference in the personality characteristics and intellectual skills they evidenced as college students. Multivariate analysis of variance revealed no overall personal adjustment differences between the three gifted groups. Because so much of the literature has focused on self acceptance and self esteem as a critical variable in achievement, this subscale was examined separately. Of the males, the high GATE group was the most accepting, followed by the medium GATE group. Those gifted males who had no special experience fell below the mean. The difference in self acceptance between males who had been in GATE classes and those who had not was significant ($p. < .01$). All three groups of gifted females had high scores on self acceptance.

To examine the students' intellectual progress, college records of SAT scores were consulted. The gifted students scored higher than the control students ($p. < .001$), but the three gifted groups did not differ. The sex differences that have been

been widely reported in math SAT scores were also evident in this study ($p. .001$), even when control subjects were removed ($p. < .05$).

The third question addressed the issue of sex differences. The men's protocols, as a group, indicated that they could be characterized as more active, ambitious, forceful, insightful, resourceful, versatile, clever, imaginative, outgoing, and rebellious than women. The women's profiles, on the other hand, suggested that women could be characterized as more honest, industrious, obliging, sincere, modest, steady, conscientious, appreciative, patient, helpful, gentle, respectful, and accepting of others. In terms of intellectual skills, the men outperformed the women on the math section of the SAT.

The final question asked whether different educational strategies have different effects on males and females. The three educational alternatives that the gifted were exposed to had no overall significant effect on either the personal adjustment or the intellectual skills examined; however, the no intervention groups exhibited a trend towards lower self acceptance. Regression analysis of the demographic variables revealed that GATE experience was the single best predictor of career aspirations in gifted females ($p. < .03$), the greater the experience, the higher the aspirations. GATE experience was not related to the males' career aspirations. Perhaps in an atmosphere where high expectations are the rule, women receive messages from their peers and teachers that it is all right to be knowledgable and to use that knowledge to achieve.

In conclusion, it seems logical that future research with the gifted will be focused on determining which educational strategies lead to an increased motivation to achieve. Furthermore, educational strategies and expectations might be varied to try to alleviate the adjustment problems gifted males seem to be experiencing. When such questions are resolved, we will be better prepared to foster the social and intellectual potential of our gifted youth.

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